

THE ARMENIAN REVIEW

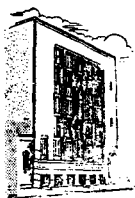
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Twenty-ninth year

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the ARMENIAN REVIEW

VOLUME TWENTY-NINE, 1—113

• SPRING, 1976

Mrs. Harriet H. Atkinson's Eyewitness Account of the Massacres at Harpoot

MRS. HARRIET H. ATKINSON

INTRODUCTION

TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, this eyewitness account of the advent of the deportations and massacres of the Armenians of the city of Harpoot (Kharpert), in the heartland of western Armenia, 1915 and subsequently, has never before been published—the more the pity for it, since it is a valuable addition to the relevant literature. Mrs. Atkinson's little memoir not only throws added light on the Harpoot phase of the massacre operation, but relates of the trials of the American-sponsored Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital during those days of terror—an episode which has remained almost wholly unchronicled.

Mrs. Harriet Atkinson was the wife of Dr. Henry Herbert Atkinson (for some reason Armenian sources usually discount his given name), a Williams and Harvard-educated medical missionary who established in 1902 the first American-run medical clinic in that then populous Armenian enclave. With the assistance of the faculty of nearby Euphrates College, an institution supported by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and with funds provided by both American and Armenian sources in the United States, Dr. Atkinson built his formal hospital finally on an “admirably healthily situated” field in nearby Mezreh.

Application of the word “hospital” (as tuned to modern concepts) to Dr. Atkinson's establishment would be wholly immodest. Dr. Atkinson was himself the

only resident physician, although he was assisted almost whilom by "visiting doctors" most of whom were natives. Mrs. Atkinson herself bore the duties of "mother of the ill", and another American lady, Miss Maria P. Jacobsen, was the "head nurse". This little staff was assisted often by other American personnel and by native orderlies, and the like, and also by the staff of Euphrates College.

The skill of "Hekim" Atkinson soon permeated the province and rich and poor, Armenian, Turk, and others, would go to the "Riggs Hivantanots" with their ailments, never being rejected, receiving equal care. The place became a legend especially among the Armenians of the vicinity.

Following Dr. Atkinson's passing, Mrs. Atkinson continued his work, administering to stricken Turks and their victims alike. In 1917, Mrs. Atkinson and her staff were ousted by the Turks, the hospital was closed down, but shortly reopened. In 1919 it was taken over by the American Near East Relief and continued until 1922 when Mustafa Kemal ordered all Americans expelled from Turkey. And so came to an end the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital, of Mezreh, Kharpert, western Armenia...which, during its days, is known to have treated 7,500 Armenian orphans, and ill of all persuasions.

To be quite honest, we have no idea how we acquired this valuable manuscript, the authenticity of which is undeniable. A number of years back, the unsigned, yellowing, but well-typed manuscript was found under a layer of old and fading photographs resting forgotten in—literally—an old shoe box in the editorial archives at the Hairenik Building, Boston, the home of this publication.

Recently, the task of determining what the miscellany was all about commenced. Legends on the obverse side of the old glossies quickly yielded the information that all this was a collection of pictures "From H.H. Atkinson, Harpoot, Turkey". The discovery of the old manuscript under these fragile photographic images was all that was needed to bring the total picture all together. It will perhaps never be known how the Hairenik came into possession of this shoebox of many treasures...but no matter, an important discovery has been made and we bring it to the attention of the public.

Mrs. Atkinson's Account

THE FOLLOWING is an account of the events in Turkey during the past three years (1) as I have seen them, and as they have had an effect upon our work in the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital. (2)

In August, 1914, Dr. Atkinson was called before the Turkish authorities and told that the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital was to be requisitioned for the use of the soldiers. He answered that they had no right, and should not do this without his consent and that of the American Consul; but he told them that the government should provide for their expense as we had no means for that. They accepted his offer and in September we prepared twenty beds in the lower wards for their use. They sent patients, also some private soldiers to help care for them. A little later we gave them sixty beds and still later one hundred beds. The (military) patients were

Turks, Kurds and Armenians. They were all thankful to us for what we did for them. They came in late one night and Miss Campbell (3) and I were up till ten o'clock bathing them and getting them to bed. We heard many such remarks as, "You mustn't put your bread in your bed. Things are clean here." There seemed to be no difference at all in the government's treatment of Christian and Moslem soldiers. Some of each were sent to us both as patients and as servants.

We told the authorities that it was our custom to have prayers every day and special service on Sundays. They made no objection and we began giving them the Gospel straight and we found them deeply interested. One Sunday I went with Dr. Atkinson to a village, the service being left in the hands of Pastor Vartan, (4) one of our most earnest workers. When we returned at night these men all began talking at once trying to tell us something. At first we could understand nothing, then we learned that they were trying to tell of the sermon which gave them the simple plan of salvation. I do not know how much of it they really grasped, but their eagerness to tell it was a rebuke to me.

I spent many precious hours with those men trying to teach them the love of God, for there is nothing of love in their religion, and I think the human heart is much the same—all responding to love. One man said, "I can understand now why you Americans are so much more merciful than we. You learn from your religion." They often said, "Why do you do all these things for us?", "Why do you love us so much?" Our answer was that we loved God and He loved the whole world, and sent Jesus to teach us that love and we must love others and teach it to them.

After a time our evening prayers began to be attended by other men in the barracks. These came because they were deeply interested. I felt that a number of them began to love Jesus in their hearts.

One teacher, whose hand had been amputated, interested me much but the way did not open for a personal conversation for a long time. One day he called me to him and began to read from 1st. John. He read on and on, exclaiming, "How beautiful!" He went out of the hospital the next day, but I felt that the seed had been sown. They all seemed glad to learn (3) our hymns and sang them with energy. I tried to teach them hymns that would tell the story of Christ.

In February (1915) we were told that we must stop the formality of the service, as complaint might be made to Constantinople and that would bring trouble on the authorities there. The officer who told me said, "Talk and sing and pray all you like, but stop the formality."

In June when the Armenian troubles began, we thought best to separate the Armenians from the Moslems in the services, for our services still went on with but little change, only dropping a little of the formality. I took the Moslems and Pastor Vartan took the Armenians. Even when the terrible things were happening all around us I still felt the power of the Gospel gripped the hearts of these men, even though some of them had been engaged in the terrible work. The Mutasarif, or head man from Moush, came to us to die after having done the most dreadful work in Moush. I sang to him one day, and talked with him. He said, "Oh, I have never heard such words before in my life." I thought that perhaps if he had heard such words before he might not have done the awful deeds he had done. If we want to stop the atrocities in Turkey wouldn't it be the surest way to open the political door so that the gospel of love might be given to the men who are doing these things?



THIS VERY RARE PICTURE, found in the "Atkinson shoebox" at the Hairenik, shows a gathering of American missionary personnel stationed in Harpoot, Van, Bitlis, Mardin, Diarbekir, Aintab and Erzeroum. The fragmented photograph, put together as best we could, was snapped, according to a hand-written legend found on its reverse side, in July, 1914, almost concurrently with the opening of the Armenian tumults which led into the 1915 massacres. Standing, left to right, rear row: Dr. Ussher, Van; Rev. Emrich, Mardin; H. H. Riggs, Harpoot; Mr. Pierce, Harpoot; Roderick Pierce, Harpoot; C. W. Riggs, Harpoot; Dr. Henry Atkinson, husband of the author of this article; J. O. Smith, Diarbekir; Elizabeth Trowbridge, Aintab; Miss Norton, Aintab; Grace E. Knapp, Harpoot. — Front row, standing: Miss Rogers, Van; Miss (?), Mardin; the son of Rev. Emrich; Miss Fenenga, Mardin; Miss Jacobsen, nurse at the Atkinson Hospital; Miss Harley, Harpoot; Miss Riggs, Harpoot; Dr. Hamilton, Aintab; Rev. Stapleton, Erzeroum; Miss Uline, Bitlis; Rev. Maynard, Bitlis. Seated, on chairs: Miss Dewey, Mardin; Mrs. Dewey, Mardin; Mrs. Harriet Atkinson, author of this article; Mrs. Jacy Atkinson, Harpoot; Mrs. Parmelee, Harpoot; Miss Campbell, Harpoot; Mrs. Smith and Arthur Smith, Diarbekir; Mrs. Maynard and Richard Maynard, Bitlis. — Seated in front on the ground: Miss Matton, Alice Atkinson, Annie Riggs, Mrs. Emma Riggs, Mrs. Pierce, Dr. Ruth Parmelee, all of Harpoot; and Robert Maynard, Bitlis.

In August, 1915, a fanatical officer told the commandant that we were making Christians of Turkish soldiers; that if we did not stop it he would write to Constantinople. The commandant sold us that it was our hospital and he could not say we must not do it, but if it continued he would have to take the soldiers out of the hospital. For a time we stopped all services, but later they gave (4) permission

for me to sing and talk, but not to read the Bible and pray. We were not hindered in this until we left.

The first of January, 1915, Red Cross funds came to us for keeping 100 soldiers. We then put in a hundred beds, but the need at that time was so great, as men were dying in the streets from typhus, that we took in a hundred and thirty or forty. We counted the floor space as our limit, instead of beds or bedding. 'as we provided food and clothing, we were able to make them more comfortable than they were in other hospitals. Those were hard times. Dr. Atkinson was sick in January with influenza. Miss Jacobsen (5) and I each had typhus and help was short. Doctor tried to do a great deal more than he was able to do. The hospital was always full. Sick soldiers having money often gave bribes to the Turkish officers in order to get into our hospital. Doctor was loved and trusted by all.

In the spring we began to notice that there was a fear among the Armenian soldiers. One Armenian in his delirium kept saying, "Count the Armenians, count the Armenians." And when the nurse was not near him one night, cut his own throat with the tin cover of the sputum cup. The schools in Harpoot had been closed and most of the buildings taken for soldiers. Boys too young for soldiers duty began coming to us, asking for work and wanting only food in return. What they really wanted was safety, and they thought to be identified with the hospital would be the safest thing for them. Doctor gave work and made work for them when he didn't have it to give. One young man in our employ was put in prison because another young man was found with a letter in his pocket addressed to this Toros of ours, saying that the Russians were near and that soon we will be under the Russian flag. This was considered treason. Doctor Atkinson tried in every way but could not secure his release. He was condemned to be exiled for ten years and the boy who had written the letter to be hung. For the time they were kept in prison. In May a number of the teachers and Professors were arrested without any reason being given as far as I know.

Early in June things being bad in Diarbekir, Dr. Smith (6) sent for help. Mr. Harry Riggs went to his assistance. Not being able to help matters any, Mr. Riggs returned bringing Mrs. Smith (7) with him. Dr. Atkinson was at this time in bed with an attack of Erysipelas. On the morning of June 7th, I heard a violent ringing of the telephone bell. Mr. Pierce (8) was in the city and he had learned that the garden where all the other missionaries were was surrounded by Turkish soldiers, and that they were being searched for papers. Mrs. Smith was the cause. She had brought a copy of a telegraphic code in order to communicate with her husband while she was away from him. They had found this. They found nothing objectionable among the missionaries, but they took the telephone away and for a time the missionaries up there were regarded with suspicion and treated rather badly. After a time this was overcome by the straightforward conduct of the missionaries.

Just at this time some bombs were found, supposedly made by an Armenian. Before this time the Armenians were told to give up their arms and many had done so, but others had not. Then the houses and persons were searched for arms and

incriminating papers. Many were imprisoned, and tortured to make them confess to having arms. (9) Villages were surrounded, houses were searched and people beaten. I went one day to one of our near villages to see about some of our friends. It was Sunday, Guards were around the city, but they let me pass. Perfect stillness reigned. I went to one house and found the family sitting in a circle on the floor. The father was in prison and an expression of terror was written on every face. The garden had been dug two or three feet deep in the search for arms. I went to another house. The wife was alone with her little ones. Her husband, the pastor of the village, had taken refuge with us in the hospital. I told her that I knew his whereabouts and that he was well, but did not tell her where he was in order that she might not know if questioned. In returning I saw a crowd of police in a side street. I asked an old woman what it meant. She said they were searching the house. All was perfectly quiet, but I was followed everywhere by ugly looks from the Moslems, both civil and military. One soldier scowled after me in an exceptionally rude manner, evidently trying to frighten me by his looks. I didn't want him on the run. So I suddenly turned on him, smiled and asked him if he had not been in our hospital sick the winter before. He stammered, looked confused, and said "Yes", which was false, for I had never seen him before. I told him I hoped he was well. He smiled, thanked me and made his deepest bow, and I went on leaving him staring, but with a different expression on his face.

At this time we tried to make friends with every police with whom we came in contact and we found that such friendships were a great help to us.

Every day reports came from Harpoot of the terrible torturing of prisoners. One day a boy came to us coming around a distance of five hours in order not to be searched. In the hem of his garment he had a little cigaret paper. It was asking for poison for three of our professors (10) and one merchant, saying they could no longer stand the torturing and they wanted to die. In Mezrah there was no torturing in prisons but Harpoot was under the government of a very wicked man; things were much worse there.

About this time the Armenian soldiers were called in from the army and shut in a large building near us called Red Konak. They were kept there a day or two without food or drink. When people came bringing food or water they were driven away. These men were all sent away one night. The officers said they were sent to Aleppo to work on the roads, but rumors started from Turkish sources that they had all been killed. (11) We never heard of them again. At this time torturing, searching and beating were going on in nearly all the villages, so far as we could hear. But in Mezrah, the seat of government, there was no torturing. Many people began coming to us for refuge and our house and hospital were full. A massacre was expected every day. Crowds of armed Kurds were seen moving about, who had a short time before been released from the prisons. Often policemen came to our door after the men who were thought to be there. It so happened that they never asked for one who was there at the time. They always took our word as truth. Once I called in a policeman and asked him the cause of all this trouble. He asked me if I knew what had been done in Van. He told me that Van had been taken by revolutionary Armenians and not by Russians. (12) He also told me of outrages which had been committed by the Armenians on the Turkish people. (13) Whether true or not he, evidently, believed them. The commandant also told Doctor



MR. AND MRS. Harriet and Dr. Henry H. Atkinson, with their three "Armenian-born" children.

Atkinson and me together that the number of desertions (14) among the Armenians on the Russian frontier and the number of traitors that had been found was the cause of all the trouble. Almost any hour in the day we could see policemen taking Armenian men to prison. Men no longer dared to go out anywhere. Near the end of June the prisoners from Harpoot were brought down to Mezrah prison. They consisted of college professors and teachers and the most influential men of the community. They were kept there a day or two and then sent out from the prison at night and for a long time nothing was heard from them. Villagers who saw them pass told us that they were bound together and some who were weak from their tortures were bound between stronger ones and dragged. After some weeks some little boys who belonged to a crowd of villagers that had fallen in with these men, were brought back by some Turks who had saved them. They said these men were taken up in the mountains near Bakhur Maden, were shot and the leading ones were afterwards beheaded to make sure that they were dead. It was then announced that the whole population of Armenians were to be deported to Corfa. (15) They were given five days to make preparations. On July 1st, the first crowd was to be sent from Mezrah. The people began selling and giving away their property and when they did not sell, the police did it for them. One could not help but think of vultures to go down the street and see Turkish men, women and children carrying away household goods for which they had paid nearly nothing. We wanted to store their things for them, but the government forbade it, though they told us we could buy what we wished. They also gave permission for us to send their money for them to America. We bought large supplies of food stuffs, filling everything. We also took in thousands of liras in gold. This was all saved for them and done with according to their instructions. There were many who had no money and nothing to sell. To these we gave money. We also made knapsacks, filling them with bread; at the same time giving all the comfort, advice and courage that we could. Hundreds came begging us to take them or their daughters or their children into the hospital. We did take all we could, but the authorities were constantly sending word to us not to meddle with government matters, or they would have to come and take all the Armenians we had in the hospital.

A small crowd went out on July 1st and a larger one was to go July 3rd. On July 2nd, the first crowd arrived from Erzeroum. It consisted of women and children from wealthy families, but not a male among them above twelve years. (16) Doctor was busy that afternoon, but Henry and I went with (American) Consul Davis to hear their story. They had been on the road two months, had started out with horses and household goods together with the men of their families. Within a day or two they were attacked by Kurds, probably those who had released them from prison, and all their men and boys killed and many of their girls carried away. They were robbed and stripped of all but one or two garments. Their guards made pretense of defending them, but that it was only a bluff was shown by their killing only two Kurds, while the Kurds killed all the Armenian men and none of the guards. Their guards then stopped at a village and took clothing for them. These rich women were regarded as special prizes and after this first day we were not permitted to see them. They were kept prisoners in a building and so far as we could learn were sought in marriage by the Turks, probably in order to get their property. They seemed to melt away somewhere and after a few weeks the few that

were left were allowed to come out and take houses in the village.

Our second crowd started July 3rd. We went early, by five in the morning, among the people and told them what we had learned from the Erzeroum women and warned them not to take much money and advised them to dress their boys as girls. Some few boys took this advice and escaped, but Vali had promised them that they were to go in safety and they believed him and went without trouble. Every few days a crowd was sent from Mezrah or the near by villages. We helped them all we could to get off. Some of those who had taken refuge in the hospital went home and prepared to go with their families, for all the time arrests were being made and men were thrown into prison. But the prisons were constantly being emptied at night; where these prisoners went we do not yet know.

Dr. Atkinson secured a promise from the Vali and the Commandant that the hospital workers should not be taken. But about July 1&th, as I remember, the military policemen came to take the Armenian soldiers who were working in the hospital to the prison. There were nine of them, but one, Suren, brightest of them, hid in the basement and one of the girls covered him with shavings, but the police had seen him and were angry. They said that if he were not found they would come back with orders to take every Armenian in the hospital, and we knew they would do it. We took the eight into our house for a few minutes of prayers and doctor told them he would do all in his power to save them. When they had gone he called the girls and told them of the threat of the police and said that we ought not to risk two or three hundred lives for the sake of one. They went and brought out Suren and he was willing to go when he knew what it meant to the rest. Doctor went with him and gave him up to the police. We sent food to the prison each day for our boys as food was not provided for the prisoners, and doctor turned every stone for their release. While they were there our pharmacist from Harpoot, Melkon Luledgian, was taken. He was thrown into prison with eight hundred businessmen and the same night they were bound by threes and sent out without food. They were robbed and taken about nine hours distance into the mountains to the northwest, and there in broad daylight they were taken up into a narrow valley and made to sit down. Then the order was given to fire. Several rounds were fired into them and then the order was given to use the bayonet. At this Melkon broke the ropes that bound him and ran. Several others did the same. They fired after them but did not touch Melkon. He ran on and on, not knowing where he was running. The others ran to a village, told this story to the villagers and were followed by the soldiers and retaken, but Melkon ran on. In the middle on the night he found himself in Mezrah. He came to the hospital, slipped by the night nurse and to Miss Campbell's room. She put him into her inner room; she herself sleeping on the porch and the next morning told us about it and we knew for the first time just what was happening to the men who were sent out from prison and what would happen to our boys if we could not save them. The villagers also spread the story of those who had escaped to them and the people woke up to the terrible truth. That night we took Melkon over to our house and hid him for a day or two, but we were afraid he might be found there, so early one morning we dressed him as a Turkish woman and sent him to Harpoot where he was hidden by a Turk for a time.

I found that I could go about the prisons and by passing friendly remarks to the guard could do about as I liked, while doctor, being a man must be a little more

dignified. So he went to the authorities when formal protests and requests were to be made, while I did the running about and would go to the officers when I wanted to beg for something. They had great respect for him and often did what he asked, but not always. They refused to spare our boys who had been in prison four days. We were expecting every night that they would be sent out. I went to the prison and slipped a handful of safety razor blades to them, telling them Melkon's story. I told them that if they were bond and sent that they were to cut their ropes nearly in two but not quite, then when the shooting should begin, they were to break their ropes and run. They were sent that night, but I never knew their fate. After all doctor's efforts to save them failed, I, with doctor's advice, decided to go to the commandant and beg for them. I went with fear and trembling, for I had never gone to a high official before and I could not forget that I was a woman and he an officer. I went and begged for all of our boys, but for Suren I especially begged, as we had delivered him up and we felt that his blood would be upon us if he were killed. I told the commandant that we could not bear this. He assured me that they would not be killed, but would be sent to work on the roads. Then I told him of the scene described by Melkon, but did not tell how I knew it. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "If that be true, I have not heard it." But he drew a line under Suren's name and promised to go to the Vali about it. That afternoon Suren was released. He was never touched again, he was always afterwards spoken of as the young man who had been given to me. For fifteen months he was a great help to us in the hospital, then he escaped to Russia by way of the Dersim.

At this time thousands were coming to us from the north, Erzeroum, Erzincan, Ordou, Trebizond and many other places. In the second company that came there were about eight thousand. They said they were about thirty thousand when they started. They had been attacked seven times by Kurds, robbed and the men killed, but that it had been impossible to kill all the men as the company was large. Some men reached us. They were camped outside Mezreh several days. Their tales were most pitiful. Men killed, girls carried away, women threw themselves and their children into streams, preferring death by drowning rather than the suffering that they must bear from hunger and abuse. Homes, friends and honor gone, for what should they care to live? How often did we tell them that no man could take away their honor, so long as the heart was pure! Picture eight thousand people, mostly women and children, camped out in the glaring July sun with only the remains of the clothing with which they had left their homes two months before and not half enough food to satisfy their hunger. Sometimes they stretched up a bit of gunny sack or an old apron to protect them from the sun. Their bodies were covered with vermin. Often there were great sores on arms, necks and faces from the burning of the sun. Many were sick with dysentery and Malaria. The guards surrounded them so that there was no chance of escape. We found two of our college boys among them, both sick. We asked to be allowed to take them to our hospital, but were refused. The people begged us to help them; often we saw new born babies that had never even been washed, wrapped in some dirty rag. When we would stop for a moment we would be surrounded, all begging for medicine, or food, but especially that we should help them to escape. We always told them that if they could escape we would take them into the hospital. Must our own people who were being sent away come to this? We have reason now to believe that their suffering was even worse than this. So far as we know, not any man went through alive.



ARMENIAN AND TURKISH DIGNITARIES, with the hospital personnel, standing at the facade of the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital, in Mezreh.

Nearly all the men had been taken by the middle of July and sent out at night from the prisons. One afternoon Dr. Atkinson was coming down from Harpoot when a crowd of old men and boys had been collected and were being driven down from Harpoot to the Mezreh prison. Wives and daughters followed them out weeping. They were driven back with the butts of the soldier's guns. Many of the old men had been for years members of our church. When one would totter and fall he was struck with the butt of a gun to bring him to his feet. Doctor came behind them all the way down the mountain. When he reached home his nerves completely went to pieces and he had hard work to pull himself together again, but there was little time in those days to dwell upon one horror, for another was so soon upon us. The poor old men were soon sent out, but not far.

One night we were awakened by shooting. Looking toward Mezreh we saw fire. Next morning we learned that a part of the prison had burned where the prisoners who were under sentence were kept. Our Toros was among them. Also a native doctor who had often assisted Dr. Atkinson. Some of the prisoners trying to escape, had been shot; the rest were burned in the prison. These two were of the latter. There were two stories given as the cause of the fire. One was that the prisoners were ordered to be sent out. They refused to go and their officers ordered them to be burned in the prison. This might be true as that part of the building was old

and not worth much. Another story was that they were ordered out and that big fat man from Husenik, (18) who was the one who had made the bombs that had been found in the beginning, set fire to the bedding. We have some reason for believing the latter story. A few days before we had I heard of this very Husenik man and that he was trying to get material and make a bomb to blow up the prison in case they were sent. He must have been nearly insane. Toros and the doctor were his friends. I went to the prison and begged them to use their influence against it. They pointed to a pile of ropes lying in the corner and said that they knew that they were to be bound and sent out. They didn't care much what they did.

One afternoon our hospital was suddenly surrounded by police. Doctor was in the operating room amputating the leg of a Turkish officer. They had come to take the Armenians, all that we had in the hospital. I do not know how many there were, but there must have been two or three hundred. I went to tell doctor but finding him in the middle of the operation, it didn't seem right to tell him. I went back and told the doctor who had come with the police that they must wait. I seated them in the front porch and I sat down with them. I told them how much it hurt us to give up these people who had come to us for refuge. They said that they were sent by the commandant, who at the time was also acting as Vali and that they must obey orders. I asked them to wait until I could go and see the commandant and ask him to change the orders. I went, asking God all the way to show me what to say. The commandant said that he was not doing it, but that it was the work of the chief of police acting under the Vali's instructions. Then I asked to see the chief of police. He came in and I had the two together. The two whose hands were perhaps the reddiest of any two men in Turkey. I asked them not to take these people away from us, but to let us have a week to send them out and then they could take them from outside. I begged them to be merciful as they would want God to be merciful with them. I asked them what they were going to answer when they were called up before God. They said they didn't know but if the Osmanli government were going to stand, these Armenians must be disposed of. The commandant told me that if the young man, Suren, whom he had given me was spared that I should be thankful, as the order was that not one Armenian should remain. He also said that the order was that no man should go outside the vilayet. I believe that order was carried out. They asked me if I would guarantee that our people would not run away provided they allowed them to be sent out of the hospital as I had requested. I told them that this was not my work, that they had police who could see to that. Of course I knew they would run away and I knew that I would help them. Then they thought they would frighten me, so the commandant said, "If you and your husband continue to meddle in the affairs of the government and we allow you to do it, they will take you and your husband and this chief of police and they will put us all into prison together." I said, "I am not one bit afraid of prison, not of anything man can do, nor of death, if it is necessary, but I am afraid of sin, and this is sin." Then he began to walk the floor and say, "What shall we do? What shall we do?" They refused my request and I went home and found Dr. Atkinson out on the front porch with a number of Armenians. He had gone through the hospital with the Turkish doctor and the police and had taken them straight past one room filled with young men and another filled with women and girls. He had also succeeded in saving several who were in the wards. One of them was our pastor Vartan. Another, one of

the college professors who was then with us. The heart of the chief of police had been touched by my talk with him and he followed me back to the hospital. As soon as he came he gave orders that the girls should not be taken that day. Then he began to sort out those on the front porch who seemed too weak to go and we began to help him. Some had come out dressed in hospital clothes. We called attention to this and sent them back to change. In confusion they dodged down into the basement and hid in the shavings. He asked some of our Turkish officers patients if there were not more than that. They said no, there were none at all except those who were sick, which was false as they knew there were many more. He also asked if there were none in our house. The house was full, and they knew it, but they said, "No, none." They at last took only twelve men. These, of course, were put in prison and sent out and we never heard of them again, but we were very thankful that the number was so small. That night we found that Henry had filled the shelves in our bedroom closets and he has since told me that he had some down in the cistern, and that some crawled through a dry sewer. That chief of police has never since refused to give me anything I have ever asked.

One day when we were eating dinner we heard a knock at the door and in walked Prof. Lulejian. (19) He had been one of the number who had been in prison and while being tortured had sent to us asking for poison. He told us how he had been tortured, and how the Kai Makam, (Mayor) had come in himself and with his own hands had beaten him. While he was beaten himself, he could hear the cries of his friends and his own brother as they were being beaten. His fingers even then were torn and bruised. Once he lost consciousness and afterwards found himself in a closet lying on a stone floor. After this in a semi-conscious state, he felt himself taken up and carried away and then found himself in the Red Crescent Hospital in bed. The man who had done so much to save the sick from the camps was a friend of his and in some way secured his release. When he was nearly well he sent him to us and we afterwards sent him to the Consulate. One night, some weeks later we received a communication from Harpoot saying that a certain Kurdish patriarch whom we knew from the Dersim would be at our gate a little after dark and for forty pounds Turkish would take anyone who wished to go to Dersim. After dark I went to the Consulate and brought the professor. We sent them off dressed as Kurds together with four or five other men. Then began a sort of underground railway for which our back porch was a station sending people to Dersim. But we stopped assisting in this work as soon as we felt it was no longer a matter of life and death. This method of escape went on for one and a half years, hundreds escaping until the Vali was changed in March, 1917. Then it all stopped.

At the time when people were taken from our hospital it was no longer possible to order people out from their homes and send them away. They would hide. Then the police began snapping them up wherever they found them, men, women and children, putting them in prison and sending them out. One day such a crowd was sent out and being weak they were only sent about two hours. One boy came back to us with about a dozen hacks and cuts from a hatchet on his back and head, and a bullet in his lung. He had been left for dead, but had crawled out and found his way to us. We had many sick patients; one woman with a bullet in her jaw, one little girl with her neck cut. She said they had been laid one on top of another and their heads cut off, two at a time. She was underneath, so her neck was not cut

through. One woman fell, and feigned death, then afterwards found some of her children cut to pieces, others she did not find, but afterwards was always looking for them, hoping that they had escaped. One man from a village who was sent out in the beginning was tied up by one leg and whirled about with his head downward, then sent out and stabbed in the abdomen and then buried. He dug himself out and came to us and told us his story. He afterwards escaped to the Dersim.

One night a wounded police was brought in to us and he told me this story: a party of eleven Armenian men had escaped from a village which had been emptied. Afterwards they came back and hid in one of their houses. Police came to open the houses of the village to put in the Moslem refugees from the Russian front. When they opened this house these men fired on them. Two or three from both sides were killed and wounded. Then the police set fire to the house and burned it, killing them as they came out. But this police told me that before he was shot he had killed the father and brother of the Armenian girl he had taken as his wife. I asked him how he could do such an awful thing. He replied that he had been ordered to do it and if he hadn't obeyed he would have been killed himself.

I heard one day that the thirteen-year old daughter of Prof. Vorperian (20) had been brought back by a Turkish officer. The professor had been in our hospital in the beginning of the trouble, and had not been put in prison but was allowed to go with his family. This daughter told me the following story: They left Mezreh July 3, in the second crowd that was deported. They travelled together to Malatia two days distance, though they were ten days in making the journey. This officer had kept close to their cart all the way. The parents noticed this and as the girl had very beautiful hair which they thought to be the attraction they cut it off; but the officer came to them and said that he wanted the girl and that it had been ordered that all the men should be killed, but if they would give him this girl he would save the father. This, the professor refused to do, saying he would rather die and have her die with him. In Malatia the professor and his sixteen year old son were put into prison. Then the officer came to the mother; she gave the girl and the son was released from prison, but the father was taken out with the other men and was never heard of again. The officer brought the girl back to Mezreh and the mother and the other children came back later and lived with them. The girl told me that most of the women in the company were sent out from Malatia and a few girls who were brought back from their number said that the women, too had been killed. Some girls brought back in this way became Moslems, but some were allowed to keep their own religion.

Pastor Vartan came to our hospital in the beginning of the trouble for an operation. We kept him sick as long as we could, but when the police came to take Armenians Dr. Atkinson wrote him a hospital servant in order to save him. The Kai Makam in Harpoot, though such a wicked man, for some reason, seemed willing to spare him and his family. His family had been left when the others were sent from Harpoot. When the Kai Makam learned the pastor was considered a hospital servant he wrote a letter to the Vali saying that this woman's husband was a servant in the hospital and asking that she be permitted to take a house and remain. Then he sent his servant with her and told her to get me to go with her and present this letter to the Vali. I was affraid to take her out on the street at that time for they were trying to make a clean sweep and were taking every Armenian to prison that

could be found. But I was afraid that if she did not go it would anger the Kai Makam with her and he would withdraw the protection he had been giving to her. I had often gone out with the Armenians when they were afraid to go alone, and had never had any one taken away from me on the street. So, after talking it over with doctor Atkinson, I went. On the way the man with us was twice stopped by the police and questioned. I began to be afraid for her. Once we passed a group of Turkish men. I heard one of them saying "That also is an Armenian." When we reached the government buildings a Turk that I knew, called me aside and asked me in a whisper if she were not an Armenian. The commandant who was acting as Vali at that time was not there. We were told to go to his office which was across town. We started and on the street we met a crowd of several hundred women and children and a few old men. They were being driven along through the street to prison. When they saw me they began to rush to me, begging for help, wanting me to take their children or to save their daughters. It was terrible to see. We took our stand at one side of the street and let them pass. One girl, a graduate of our college, then a teacher, a girl whom I had known and helped from the time she was a little girl caught my hand and said in English, "Oh why didn't you save me?" A police took his stand just behind me. He said nothing but I knew why he was there. I could do nothing, but I trembled for the woman beside me. They passed on and were sent out the next day. We went to the Commandant and he told me that the fate of the hospital workers had not yet been decided, so we went home. Two days later came Byram, the Turkish festival and the deportations stopped, but we were not allowed to breathe freely.

One day a little later, the hospital was surrounded and all the workers were told to go to the police station and register. There was in the hospital then one woman from a wealthy family who had escaped from Malatia and returned. Police were hunting her to send her again as they feared she might later claim property. Of course we feared that they would send all our servants and we had nearly a hundred at that time, although our patients were only about a hundred. The work had been divided and subdivided and each one had some kind of work; the Doctor, Miss Campbell and I all went to the police station with them. I was much afraid for this wealthy woman. I whispered to her asking if she could sew and telling her she could register as our sewing woman. She did so, giving her name and place of residence exactly right and was not recognized, although we learned afterwards that the chief object of registering them all was to find her. After this we had about two months of comparative quiet. On November 4th, Doctor had taken the children and gone to Harpoot. Two of our men were out burying a body, when suddenly the hospital was surrounded by police and no one could go out or come in, and those who were out were taken up and sent to the police station. I wanted to see what it meant. I ran to the gate but was not allowed to pass. I ran to another and was again sent back. Then I ran to another and told the guard there that he did not know his orders. That the chief of police would never refuse to let me go where I pleased and that if he didn't let me pass, I would report him. He looked ashamed and I laughed at him and he let me go. I found the streets in confusion, people crying everywhere, police running and groups of people gathered in places guarded by one or two men waiting to be taken to the police station. I ran to the police station and there crowds were being brought in. I asked for the chief of police. They said he was out and

would not be in till sundown. A number of our own people were already there. I could do nothing until he came in. I started up another street and met a crowd of our own people being driven along. I also met some of the German missionary ladies. I told them we could do nothing till the chief of police came in and that would not be till sundown. "No," said one of the ladies, "He will not be in soon, he is out now riding like hell," and she didn't mean to be profane. In a minute we saw him go tearing by on his black horse, riding just as she had said. On my way home, a window in the house of a Turkish officer was opened and four of our girls called to me that they had gone in there for refuge. I told them I would come for them after dark. When I reached home Doctor and the children had arrived. When the trouble began a little boy had run out to where the men were burying the woman and told them. They left the body on the stretcher and ran up to Harpoot to tell Dr. Atkinson. Nothing had happened up there as yet, so he came home as quickly as he could. The next morning we made out lists of all the people that we could claim and all their relatives and went to the chief of police and asked for them. The Germans did the same. (21) It happened that we met before the woman's prison. Their names were shouted at the door of the prison and one by one they came out. Just across the street was a mosque decorated with the German and Turkish flags and Moslems were going in to give thanks to God for the subjugation of Servia and the opening of the Balkan railway. While we stood there two crowds of women and children from the villages were driven past. There must have been three or four hundred in each crowd. Such crowds usually appealed to us for help, but these passed in perfect silence, their heads bowed in dumb despair. At last our lists were finished. They had given us every one that we had asked for and we started away and the doors were closed. Then the wail that went up from those who were left behind I shall never forget. Why had not our faith been stronger when we presented our lists? Why had we not asked for more?

Late in the summer they quit putting the crowds that came from the North into the open camp, but shut them in the Armenian Apostolic cemetery which was enclosed with high walls. One day we heard that there were people there from Trebizond. Dr. Parmelee (22) wanted to find some friends, so I went down there with her. A large crowd had been sent out the night before, leaving only the weak, sick and dying. But there must have been several hundred of them. Bread was given to them, but not enough. They were dying of hunger and disease. A group of soldiers had dug a great big grave as big as a room and some six feet deep. When the people died their friends would climb down into the grave and put their bodies in until they had a layer all over the ground. Then a layer of dirt was thrown on. When I saw it one layer had been finished and another begun and the soldiers stood there leaning on their shovels, smoking their cigarets and joking with each other. I look back it seemed terrible for those people to see their graves being dug and to know that there was no way of escape, but at the time I only thought of how glad I was they could be buried in a cemetery instead of being left for the birds and the beasts, and that they could die quietly and not be killed.

About the end of October Dr. Atkinson took a trip around Lake Guljuk, which was about 15 miles distant. He had only gone a short distance when he began to see bodies by the roadside. Near the foot of the mountain were a great number. These still having their clothes on. But around the lake he estimated that there were

between five and ten thousand all entirely naked. Nearly all women and children and nearly all the women showed signs of mutilation, let us hope after death. They showed signs of having been killed in various ways. Some were shot, some beheaded, many were hacked or cut with hatchets or knives. In one place he found a ravine where the bodies lay four or five deep just as they had fallen. They had evidently been stripped and then crowded over the precipice. In some places, the Kurds who lived in the neighborhood had evidently tried to rid themselves of the stench by gathering the bodies together and burning them. These evidently were not our own people, but were from the regions north of us, as was indicated by many papers that were found scattered about. In the valley where the Americans usually camp at the lake, there was nothing at all. These people were without doubt some of the thousands who had camped outside Mezreh during the summer. Is it any wonder that Dr. Atkinson came back home sick at heart, not wanting to live any longer on this wicked earth.

Two months later he went Home (23) and I was left to face life without him, yet not alone, for God's presence and power were wonderful in those days. The very men who had given us so much trouble, those whose hands were red with human blood, came to grasp my hand and weep over him.

At the time the doctor left we had 65 Armenians registered as hospital workers. We had three houses rented in Mezreh. One filled with the children of our workers. During the deportation we had kept 35 of these children in the big, clean operating room which we were not using at that time. Two other houses were filled with people whom we had rescued but who were homeless. We had also sent many up to Harpoot. The great weight that rested on me at the time of his death was the Armenians. When we had such a hard time when working together to save them, what could I do alone? But God lifted this weight in a certain assurance which came to me that nothing more would happen to them. Miss Mc Laren (24) came to us at that time from Van, and I shall always think she was sent directly by God. She was a great help and comfort to me. The officials were usually kind to me and I was rarely refused when I asked a favor of them. Once or twice lower officials tried to impose upon me. The higher officials always took my part when I appealed to them. My one desire was to hold onto the hospital till my husband's successor could come at the end of the war. In April the Red Cross funds were cut off and we could no longer support the Turkish soldiers in the hospital. But we offered to keep them and still care for them, the government furnishing their food. They seemed glad to have us do this and still left the hospital in our hands. We were given one of the remaining Armenians doctors to look after the patients, and later we were given a German surgeon and when he left, a Greek.

When news of the breaking of relations with America came, we had in the hospital about 125 Turkish soldiers, 25 or 30 private patients, mostly poor, whom we were supporting from the income from the pharmacy. We had always kept back a part of the hospital for our own patients. There were always kept back a part of the hospital for our own patients. There were only about 16 Armenian servants and nurses, the others all having escaped to the Dersim. The Turkish doctors begged me to stay and promised me that every protection would be given me, even though war should be declared and that I might keep the control of the Hospital which had been my husband's life work into the hands of the Turkish government. On the

other hand the ambassador was urging us to go and it didn't seem right to remain with my three children when famine was staring us in the face. I decided to go. I turned the hospital over to the government with the understanding that they were to hold it in trust at the end of the war. We made lists of everything belonging to the hospital, they and I signed them. They, both civil and military governments keeping a copy and I one. Then I asked them to continue to let the income from the pharmacy support the poor sick, as I had been doing. They promised to do this. Then they decided to send all the soldiers out and open the hospital to the public. After I left a letter from our pharmacist told me that they were doing this and at that time they had 70 or 80 patients in the hospital, nearly all poor Armenian servants I had left there were still there. I could ask no more than this.

FOOTNOTES TO ATKINSON

- (1) The period 1914-17 is roughly meant.
- (2) See Introduction. The hospital was named after a devoted lady missionary of a well-known American family which long served among the Armenians.
- (3) Miss *Elizabeth L. Campbell*.
- (4) Otherwise unidentifiable.
- (5) Miss *Maria P. Jacobsen*. See Introduction.
- (6) Dr. *Judson A. Smith*, like Dr. Atkinson a medical missionary.
- (7) Mrs. *Hildegards Smith*.
- (8) Otherwise unknown.
- (9) This of course is the Harpoot phase of the general Turkish search operation which took place in every area of western Armenia with the purpose of establishing a case that the Armenians were armed, thus constituted "security risks" to wartime Turkey and, for it, had to be "deported" to areas where they would represent no threat to the Turkish war effort. What arms the Turks invariably found were old rusted hunting pieces and the like.
- (10) The reference is obviously to three Armenians, members of the faculty of Euphrates College. See later in this paper where two are identified. See also. *f.* (20).
- (11) The Harpoot facet of the infamous "Ameli Tabouri" (forced labor battalions) story of the Turkish genocide effort. With the advent of the Turkish entrance into the war as the ally of Germany, a general mobilization, ordered by Constantinople, resulted in the assembling of all physically-fit Armenian males 17-55. Meant ostensibly to bear honorable arms as soldiers of Turkey, these men were assigned to specially formed "pack-animal" units, and were then simply slaughtered-off, leaving of course the remaining Armenian populace helpless to defend itself. The "Ameli Tabouri" operation was another coldly calculated Turkish step in the implementation of a program of total massacre.
- (12) The Turks put great store in their propaganda that the defensive operations of the people of Van had brought about the need to massacre Armenians throughout the provinces as "people in rebellion". The historical chronology is that the Vanites resorted to self-defense *only* when it became clear that the sword of massacre was about to descend on Van.
- (13) Pure propagandistic bosh. A people in the throes of the agony of deportation and massacre could not have had the muscle to commit "outrages" and there has been little proof of such.
- (14) The "deserter" problem was another facet of the Turkish massacre plan.

The Armenians were accused of "deserting" wholesale from the Turkish armies, but research has brought to light that the Turks, not Armenians, were guilty of fleeing their military posts. Having then "established" that the Armenian soldiery was disloyal, the Turk argued that the entire nation was likewise guilty, could not be trusted—and ipso facto—the "deportations"...

(15) More accurately, Keorfeh, a place northeast of Harpoot. But the caravans were to be herded southward, to the Syrian deserts.

(16) Authoritative sources confirm the fact of the savage massacre of the Armenian males from Erzeroum along the "deportation" routes.

(17) Dersim, a mountainous, almost inaccessible area north of Harpoot, and the home haunts of the Kurdish ashirets. As we shall see later in this story, friendly Kurds played a large role in sheltering thousands of Armenians in their forbidding hills.

(18) A suburb of Harpoot.

(19) The reference is to Professor *Donabed G. Lulejian*, a member of a prominent family of Armenian professionals, and a biology instructor at Euphrates College. He had studied at Yale and Cornell, after having taken his earliest degree from Euphrates. His biographers agree that he was subjected to "unbelievable tortures" in prison which left him "half dead" until he passed away, apparently from consumption, in 1917 in Erzinka, after having passed through the Dersim refuge.

(20) Professor *Megerditch Vorperian*, a member of the education faculty of Euphrates College, and earlier a student at Princeton University. He was a noted writer and artist. After suffering terrible beatings as a prisoner, he was "deported" and killed near Malatia in the early fall of 1915. Mrs. Atkinson refers to three Armenian professors seized by the Turks, and identifies two, Professors Lulejian (see *f.* 19) and Vorperian. The third and unidentified pedagogue was Professor *Hachadoor K. Nahigian*, a graduate of the University of Michigan, and a language teacher at Euphrates. He was killed in June, 1915.

(21) A German-sponsored missionary school and orphanage was found in Harpoot.

(22) Dr. *Ruth A. Parmelee*, a member of the medical staff of Euphrates College.

(23) That is, Dr. Atkinson passed away.

(24) Miss *Grisell M. McLaren*.

An Album of Rare Photographs from the Collection of Mrs. Atkinson

THE ATKINSON 'shoe-box' contains over three-score photographs most time-tortured and ravaged by brittleness. From among this collection we reproduce, to the best of the printer's ability, some of the better preserved and representative photographs, preserving, where possible, Mrs. Atkinson's own identifications, as found in pencil scrawl on the reverse of each positive. — ED.



"Picnic Association of Native [Armenian] Association and Missionaries of the Mission in the garden of the Harpoot mission. Harpoot, Armenia, 1904."



"Dr. Atkinson [center] with two Armenian physicians who assisted him in his work."



"Armenians at harvest".



"An Hospital picnic at Chiftlik"



"My Armenian girls and women."



"My kindergarten children."



"My youngest babies".